FORT WASHINGTON
AND THE
ENCAMPMENT AT WHITE MARSH

RICHARD McCALL CADWALADER

1901

The Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution.

Observance of the One Hundred and Twenty-third Anniversary of the Evacuation of Philadelphia by the British Army.

Fort Washington and the Encampment at White Marsh, November 2, 1777.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE SOCIETY BY THE PRESIDENT,

RICHARD McCALL CADWALADER,

AT HIS RESIDENCE,
"STONEDGE," ON THE SKIPPACK PIKE,

JUNE 15, 1901.

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ADDRESS

OF

RICHARD McCALL CADWALADER,

AT "STONEDGE,"

June 15, 1901.

Mr. Chairman and Fellow Members of the Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution:

In accordance with our usual custom to commemorate some historic event, you have come to the scene of the encampment at White Marsh and Fort Washington. Let me remind you however that unlike other expeditions, you are on this occasion, on hallowed ground, literally surrounded by localities closely identified with the active events of the War of the Revolution.

Along here marched the militia, under General Potter to Militia Hill, and along this Skippack road, through these fields, the militia were supposed to be on guard at the time of the attempt to capture Lafayette at Barren Hill, just beyond the wood on the right. Directly in front is St. Thomas' Church, occupied by both armies, and where Gen. Wayne rallied the troops after the battle of Germantown.

In the rear is Edge Hill, the scene of a fierce fight at the time of Howe's threatened attack on Fort Washington. To the left is Fort Washington, where a part of the army encamped, defended by a redout that can still be seen. Behind, higher up, is Camp Hill where the main army was stationed. Lower down in the valley is George Emlen's house, Washington's headquarters. In the rear are the Limekiln Pike and York roads along which the troops marched. Further to the left is Hatboro, then known as "Crooked Billet," from the sign of a tavern, where some 800

British troops attacked Gen. Lacey sent out by General Washington while at Valley Forge, to stop marauding.

Then further along is the Bethlehem Pike, the road to Bethlehem and Easton, and near by the Three Tuns Tavern where Washington is said to have dined with his officers, on the march to Valley Forge. The descendants of the host to this day, celebrate the event by a dinner each year. Still further in the circle is the Foulke Mansion, made famous by Miss Sallie Wister's letters, relating that the young ladies were obliged to flirt with the officers of both armies; then the Drayton farm where some 10,000 men encamped at the time of the headquarters at the Morris house immediately adjoining. Here the court martial sat at the request of Gen. Wayne, and a council of war discussed an attack on Germantown. Continuing thus on, the Skippack Creek, Matson's Ford, Swedes Ford, Plymouth and Barren Hill, completing the circle.

It is therefore not only with pleasure, but with some pride that I welcome you to the White Marsh Valley. How it ever obtained that name was for a time seriously discussed. At first, White Marsh was called Farmerstown from Major Jasper Farmer, the first settler. Some say the name came from the white sand oozing from the ground. Rev. Mr. Millet, a former Rector of St. Thomas' Church, contended it was from a parish in England, but the parish has never been found, though the name appears in Virginia and North Carolina. Enthusiastic followers of Pastorius, who settled Germantown, claimed the name from "Whit mar sun" in Friesland, Holland.

It is finally settled that the name came from the wide marsh along the Wissahickon, which, as the local historians are fond of saying, developed into the beautiful name of "White Marsh." (In 1713 the Germans on the Skippack petitioned that a road be opened from Pennypacker's Mills to the wide marsh at Farmer's Mill.)

Among numerous others, there are two Fort Washingtons of importance; the one on the Hudson erected by Col. Rufus Putnam, just above New York, to command the river, guard the

stores at Peekskill and prevent reinforcements to Canada, and *this* fort almost in front, to the left of St. Thomas' Church.

I propose to make a brief address from Fort Washington on the Hudson to Fort Washington in the White Marsh Valley. The capture of Fort Washington on the Hudson was one of the worst blows of the whole War, and had the effect of changing the plans of both armies, resulting in the march to Philadelphia and the encampment at White Marsh. The campaign from the Hudson was one continuous campaign to Fort Washington here, ending with the retreat to Valley Forge. It also embraces the most critical period of Washington's military life, for he was never able to assert himself until the winter at Valley Forge. It is of special importance to us, because nearly all the troops were Pennsylvania regiments under Colonel Magaw. They were among the best in the service and well officered.

You will remember that soon after Washington took command at Cambridge, he hastened to the troops investing Howe at Boston after the battle at Bunker Hill. The Americans succeeded in fortifying Dorchester Heights, thus commanding the town. Howe evacuated Boston, and set sail for Halifax, as if to aid against Canada, but really to await reinforcements from his brother Admiral Howe.

Washington conceived that he would make for New York to attack the centre of men and supplies.

The American army withdrew to Long Island, and fortified the Heights of Brooklyn, to command New York. Howe returned, landing some 25,000 men at Staten Island. The Americans, 17,000 men, were outgeneraled and surrounded, although the fighting was fierce. In the midst of a dense fog, Washington withdrew his army, effecting a masterly retreat to New York, thence to White Plains where he awaited Howe's army, in a fortified camp.

There was some criticism against Washington for the battle of Long Island, but the Declaration of Independence had but a few days before been declared, and Howe's reinforcements from Europe were a surprise. Washington established himself at

White Plains, foiling Howe's attempt to get in his rear, fortified his position, expecting an attack. Howe followed. Military critics say that Howe could have destroyed the American army and should have attacked. Letters from officers confirm this: at least a hostile, well-disciplined army confronted the Americans who were depressed and discouraged. For some reason General Howe hesitated, probably hoping that he could still make terms, but it soon developed that he intended to take Fort Washington by assault.

Fort Washington with Fort Constitution on the opposite side, and Fort Lee further towards Peekskill, with various contrivances blocked the Hudson River. It was supposed that it was a very strong position. The Pennsylvania Regiments under Cadwalader, Magaw and parts of Miles and Atlee's battalions comprised nearly the entire garrison, and were stretched out some two miles. Magaw was in command. Howe's vessels succeeded in passing up the river. Washington saw it was hopeless to remain, as his experience in the French and Indian War in Virginia had taught the danger of a chain of Forts with a weak force; he protested but was unheeded with the fatal result. The same thing happened here; Congress insisted Fort Washington should be held. Washington had gone to West Point to arrange a fortified position there, intending to evacuate. Magaw was confident and Washington had yielded to Greene who was in command on the spot. Greene in the meantime had thrown in about 1,000 men, making the total about 3,000. By a vastly superior force, the Americans were driven from the field to the Fort. It was so small, and became so crowded they were unable to move and defend themselves; surrender followed. Lord Howe returned some 2,800 men and officers besides a great deal of artillery. There was no such loss during the War. The number of prisoners was so great that some were never exchanged.

Discovering a letter from Colonel Lambert Cadwalader, who commanded his Regiment in the Fort to Col. Timothy Pickering, I give you its substance:

TRENTON, May 1822.

Dear Sir,

I recd your letter of the 15th inst. and thank you for the information it contains.

It is now more than Forty five years since the Affair of Fort Washington, and though it can scarcely be expected I should be able, after so long an interval, to afford you a full Narrative of all the Incidents that occur'd on the Day of the Attack, yet I have it in my power, in some Measure, to satisfy your inquiries. I shall however avail myself, in performing this Task, and to save Trouble, of a statement of this Nature, wh I made in the year 1811, at the Request of a Friend of mine, formerly a Captain in the 3d Pennsylvania Battalion wh I commanded in the War of the Revolution, who was writing a book entitled " Memoirs of a Life chiefly passed in Pennsylvania within the last Sixty years," in which he mentions the Attack on Fort Washington, and our Posts, on the Island of New York.

My Statement commences on page 175 of that Work, and ends in page 180, with my Arrival at the Fort; exclusively of which I furnished not a single Sentence published in the Book. I however recommend to your notice, a Paragraph of the Author, in his Book pages 188, 189, in which he gives the following extract from Genl Washington's Letter to Congress.

" I sent a billet to Col. Magaw directing him to hold out, and I would endeavor in the Evening to bring off the Garrison, if the Fortress could not be maintained, as I did not expect it could, the Enemy being possessed of the adjacent Ground." When I arrived at the Fort, I found the British had succeeded, in their several Attacks, and were in possession of all the Ground, except that in which the Fort stood. That they should have been possessed of all the adjacent Ground with the Force they employed, could not well be wondered at, when it is known,

1st That the Post on the Rear of Mount Washington was attacked by 3000 Hessians, against Col Rawlin's single Regiment of Riflemen.

2d That the Post at the Point on Haarlem River, opposite to Fort Washington, was assailed by the British Guards & Light Infantry, and defended by a raw Regiment of Militia.

3d. That at Roger Morris's House not a Man was posted for Defence, and when Six or Seven Hundred Highlanders approached the Shore, the only opposition they encountered was by the Detachment of about 150 Men from the lower Line wh they could not well spare.

4th. That the attack on the lower Line, extending across the Island of New York, was by 1600 British Troops against 650 Men; the Number of Men left after the Detachment of 150 Men was sent to Roger Morris's House.

The Lower Line required 3000 Men for an efficient Defence. The Assailants in the whole, were estimated at 7000, supported by the British Army.

The Fort and the extent of the Ground, including the Flanks on the Haarlem and North Rivers, required at least 8000 men. The Fort I always considered as an open Field Fort—constructed of earth, without Casemates or even Shelter—(the Cannon Iron six Pounders) without any qualification or Character, which could possibly be construed into a Fortress capable of standing a Siege, against a regular Army, furnished with Artillery.

Before I left the Fort, many weeks previous to the Attack, to take charge of the lower Line and the adjacent Ground, I had a Conversation with the commanding Officer on the Island, in which I most forcibly inculcated the necessity of instantly attending to the full Supply of Water, Ammunition and Provisions and everything requisite for the Defence of the Fort, and also proposed to him to form a Work which I conceived would be of great importance in flanking the Enemy should they attempt to ascend the Hill in Rear of Mount Washington—the Spot they actually selected for the Attack; all of which he cordially approved.

General Washington's idea of the Incompetency of the Fort to make a serious Defence, is efficiently evinced in his Billet to

Col. Magaw; and I may add the Sentiment entertained by Genl Lee, who in a Conversation he had with me, reprobated the Measure of keeping the Garrison on New York Island; and said when he recd the Intelligence of the unfortunate event, he was so excited, that he tore the Hair out of his Head.

I have thus, with Candour and Impartiality given you the best Information in my Power, and if the Facts I have disclosed should bear hard upon the Advisers and Abbettors, of the fatal Measure of keeping the Troops on the Island, after General Washington had crossed to the West side of the North River, and whilst General Howe was marching his Army down to King's Bridge, I would not take a Feather from the weight which must fall on their heads, however dignified, or however high they may have ranked in the Army. * * * * * *

Few remain who can look so far back as we can, and upon Scenes more important to our Country.

With great Regard & Esteem
I remain, Dear Sir,
Your Obedt Servt
Lamb[t] Cadwalader.

Col. Timothy Pickering.

Now the point I wish to make is this, the capture of Fort Washington on the Hudson changed the whole campaign of both armies, and led to movements resulting in the encampment at White Marsh after the Battle of Germantown. From the Hudson to Fort Washington was one continuous campaign, ending with the retreat to Valley Forge.

Washington immediately retreated to the Jerseys, throwing a body of troops between the enemy and the Delaware, to protect Philadelphia. He cautioned Gen. Charles Lee to be on the alert, but Lee thought he could take care of himself, exclaiming, "Oh! General, how could you be persuaded by those whose judgment was inferior to your own?" This was the first echo of what afterwards became the "Conway Cabal," for Lee and Gates

thought Washington's star was waning, and Col. Reed, of Washington's staff, writes to Lee: "We are in an awful and alarming situation. I think yourself or some one should go to Congress and form plans of a new army." The correspondence between Washington and Lee, and Lee and Gates is one of the extraordinary occurrences of the whole War.

Lee disagreed with Washington as to the designs of the enemy against Philadelphia, and meditated an attack in the rear which he thought would redound to his own reputation. He replies to Reed that as soon as he carried out his own views, he would fly to the aid of the Commander-in-chief, as he really thought the Commander-in-chief could do better with him than without him.

Washington had been closely followed by the enemy and lingered at Brunswick in the hope of reinforcements. His men were dispirited by their misfortunes, and the loss of baggage. Gen. Heath, who had been ordered forward and was withheld by Lee, writes that "Gen. Lee's conduct is so extraordinary that one is at a loss to account for it." Lee still delaying, Washington writes, "Do come on! Your arrival may be the means of preserving a city whose loss must prove of the most fatal consequence to the cause of America."

Putnam was detached to take command of Philadelphia and put it in a state of defense. Congress adjourned to Baltimore. Washington had then about 5,000 men; 1,000 N. J. Militia, 1,500 Militia from Philadelphia and 500 German Yeomanry from Pennsylvania. Gates, however, he was informed, could come with seven Regiments, and these, with the troops from Lee, would enable him to strike a blow. Lee then at Morristown, with 4,000 men, writes to Washington, "I cannot persuade myself that Philadelphia is the object at present. Cannot I do more service by attacking their rear?"

Washington replies, "Philadelphia, beyond all question, is the object of the enemy's movements, and nothing less than our utmost exertions will prevent Gen. Howe from possessing it. The force I have is weak and utterly incompetent. I must therefore

entreat you to push on with every possible succor you can bring." Lee heard that Gates had arrived at Peekskill, and writes to Heath to forward three Regiments to Morristown, adding, "I am in hopes of recapturing the province. It was really in the hands of the enemy before my arrival."

On the 11th of December he writes to Washington he should march to the ferry above Burlington. Washington replies, "I am surprised that you should be in doubt as to which route to take. I have so frequently mentioned our situation and the necessity of your aid, that it is painful to me to add a word on the subject. Congress has directed that Philadelphia be defended to the last extremity. The fatal consequences that must attend its loss are but too obvious to everyone. Your arrival may be the means of saving it."

Lee finally decamped from Morristown, but marched only about 8 miles to a small town. Leaving General Sullivan in command of the troops, he took up his quarters at a tavern at Baskenridge some miles distant. As the British were 20 miles away he took only a small guard. He had ordered General Sullivan to march to Pluckamin, off the route he was ordered to take, indicating an attack on the British at Brunswick. He writes to Gates, "The ingenious manœuvre of Fort Washington has completely unhinged the goodly fabric we have been building. There never was so damned a stroke; entre nous! a certain great man is damnably deficient! He has thrown me into a situation where I have my choice of difficulties. If I stay in this province I risk myself and army, if I do not stay, the province is lost forever. As to what relates to yourself, if you think you can be in time to aid the General, by all means go. You will at least save your army." Almost at that moment, Colonel Harcourt and his dragoons appeared before the house, and very fortunately General Lee was captured, placed on a horse bareheaded, in slippers and blanket coat, and carried to Brunswick.

General Sullivan, assuming command, changed his route and joined Washington. The British supposed they had captured

the most scientific of the American generals, who had neglected the first principle of war, "Keep a united army."

Severe words were spoken against Gen. Lee and serious accusation made, somewhat modified by the harsh treatment he ingeniously complained of. Washington writes, "This is an additional misfortune, and the most vexatious as it was from his own folly and imprudence." Washington had previously expressed faith in Lee, but added, "He is fickle, capricious and ambitious."

A party seems about this time to have sprung up in Congress for the purpose of superseding Washington. If Lee had succeeded in his schemes he would probably have been made Commander-in-chief.

An intercepted letter convinced Washington that Howe was only waiting for the River to freeze to commence active operations. Being reinforced by Sullivan and Gates, Washington determined on the aggressive. He offered a command to Gates to coöperate from Bristol, but Gates declined and set out for Philadelphia. He was urged to confer with Colonel Reed and General John Cadwalader at Bristol. This he seems to have avoided, and told Wilkinson, one of his staff, that he should suggest to Congress that instead of attempting to stop Howe at the Delaware, we ought to retire to the South of the Susquehanna and form a new army there. In spite of all these complications, however, Washington on that Christmas night crossed the Delaware with about 2,400 men and won the Battle of Trenton, taking 1,000 prisoners, of whom 32 were officers. The other divisions not joining, his position was extremely hazardous, so he recrossed the river. The time of many men was about to expire. This was the turning point of the Revolution. The men were persuaded to serve six months longer, but there was no money. Washington writes to Robert Morris: "If you could possibly collect £100 or £150 it would be of service." Morris was at his wits end, but finally a wealthy Quaker loaned the money. Just think of it! $750! Fiske says $50,000 were sent.

The ice impeded crossing, thus enabling Howe to concentrate his forces at Princeton. Cornwallis, who had obtained leave of

absence, was hastily recalled. He assumed command and entered Trenton. The two hostile armies encamped on the two sides of the Assanpink Creek. Cornwallis was urged to attack that night, but feeling sure of the game, said he would "bag the fox in the morning." Leaving his fires burning, Washington slipped away in the night. Cornwallis was completely outgeneralled, for Washington pushed on for the British stores at Brunswick. Meeting a force of the enemy, possibly two regiments, he was delayed to fight the battle of Princeton. Cornwallis followed; thus began the race to Brunswick.

To General Putnam at Philadelphia, Washington writes: "I am in hopes of driving the enemy from the Jerseys."

To General Heath, at the Highlands, he writes: "The enemy are in great confusion," and directs him to move towards New York while he followed to Morristown.

In the meantime Cornwallis collected his troops at Brunswick and Amboy, to have communication by water with New York, presenting, as Hamilton said, the extraordinary spectacle of a powerful army straitened within narrow limits, and never permitted to transgress those limits with impunity. It was a triumphant close to the most critical period of the war, as Irving says, gaining for Washington from statesmen and generals in Europe, the name of the American Fabius. Cornwallis, at the surrender of Yorktown, expressing his admiration, said: "After all, your Excellency's operations in New Jersey were such that nothing could surpass them."

The British officers wrote that the rebels were fleeing in confusion, but Thomas Paine, who had accompanied the army, says: "With a handful of men we continued an orderly retreat four hundred miles, saving baggage, ammunition, field pieces, stores and crossing four rivers. None can say that our retreat was precipitate for we were three weeks in performing it, that the country might have time to come in. Twice we marched back to meet the enemy."

Howe was in winter quarters in New York; his troops loosely cantoned about the Jerseys from the Delaware to New Brunswick.

The British generals had been outgeneraled, defeated and held in check by Washington, encamped on the Heights of Morristown. Various strategic movements took place without particular change in position. Elias Boudinot tells of the spy who had been sent by Howe to Washington's headquarters. Being deceived by false returns he reported to Howe who decided it would be imprudent to attack. ("Life and Letters of Elias Boudinot.")

There was still fear that Howe might ascend the Hudson and join Burgoyne, as he should have done, or make an attack upon New England in accordance with his original plan, yet the fitting out of the fleet looked like an attack on Philadelphia. Finally when the fleet was seen in the capes of the Delaware, Washington marched to Germantown by this York road, camping at Neshaminy Falls near Hartsville.

Fiske, in his American Revolution, page 307, says: Howe's expedition by sea was in consequence of General Lee's advice. This proved his ruin, as his instructions were to get back in time to aid Burgoyne. Fiske also adds that eighty years after the war a paper was found, dated March 29th, 1777, marked "Mr. Lee's plan" thus proving that Lee's subsequent behavior on the field of Monmouth was rank treason.

Spending some days at Stenton, the Logan family homestead, after conference at Philadelphia, Washington hastened to Chester. In the meantime precaution was taken to defend the approaches by the river. Some supposed that Charleston would be the objective point, and at a council of war it was proposed to march toward the Hudson and attack New York, as it could hardly be believed that Howe would desert Burgoyne. As there was much disaffection at Philadelphia, Washington marched his army through the city to Front and Walnut streets, making all the display possible, continuing on to Wilmington at the confluence of Christiana Creek and the Brandywine, where he set up his headquarters.

Howe finally landed at the head of Elk on Chesapeake Bay, seventy miles from Philadelphia, hoping to find friends in the lower counties.

The divisions of Generals Greene and Stephens were ordered from Wilmington. Sullivan arrived with 3,000 men. Washington had made up his mind to a battle in the open field. He had about 15,000 men, only 11,000 of whom were effective. The British had 18,000, but only 15,000 in action. Cornwallis gained the rear and Sullivan was ordered to oppose him, while Wayne kept Knyphausen at bay at the Ford. Sullivan was forced to give way. Knyphausen tried to force his way across the Ford. Wayne, and Proctor's artillery opposed him. Greene was summoned to support the right wing. The British were victorious and we were driven from the field. Wayne retired to the Chester Road. The Commander-in-chief arriving with Greene, the whole army took position behind Chester for the night. The scene of this battle deciding the fate of Philadelphia was 28 miles from Philadelphia. Congress fled to Lancaster and afterward to Yorktown. Howe did not push the pursuit. Lafayette says had he done so and marched directly to Darby, the American army would have been destroyed.

Washington taking advantage of Howe's inactivity, passed through Darby on the 12th, across the Schuylkill to Germantown within a short distance of Philadelphia, encamping at Hill's house near the present Queen Lane reservoir. Leaving Armstrong with some Pennsylvania militia to guard Philadelphia, he recrossed the Schuylkill and advanced toward the Lancaster road with the intention of turning Howe's left flank. Howe made a similar disposition to outflank him. The two armies came in sight of each other at the Warren Tavern, 23 miles from Philadelphia, but were prevented by a violent storm from engaging. Through the rain and mire, they marched to Yellow Springs and thence to Warwick Furnace. Detaching Wayne to get in the rear, in touch with General Smallwood of the Maryland Militia, and watch for Howe's baggage and hospital trains, Washington crossed at Parker's Ford and took position. Wayne got to Tredyffrin near Paoli and urged Washington to come on to attack. But the country being full of disaffected persons, Howe received information and detached General Gray to surprise Wayne. Wayne

ordered his men to sleep on their arms. Col. Hampton, the second in command, received the attack, resulting in the massacre of Paoli. Wayne retreated, rallied his troops and made a stand. The British retired with 70 or 80 prisoners and eight baggage wagons. Smallwood's men seeing the victors approaching, fled in a panic. Having disposed of Wayne, Howe made a rapid march up the Schuylkill on the road to Reading, as if to capture the stores; this was a feint.

Washington followed to Pottsgrove, 30 miles from Philadelphia. Howe succeeded in crossing at Valley Forge, and Gordon's Ford (Phœnixville), and moving southward, encamping at Stony Creek, Norristown, for the night, slipped into Philadelphia by Germantown, a march of 20, some say 30, days.

Washington then collected his force, about 8,000 and 3,000 militia, marched to Pottsgrove, Pennypacker's Mills, to Skippack Creek, camping at Mecthacton Hills, 14 miles from Germantown.

About this time Washington heard of the surrender of Burgoyne to Gates, who had reported directly to Congress, then sitting at Yorktown, ignoring his Commander-in-chief, taking the credit of Schuyler's sagacity, Washington's activity in detaining Howe, and Arnold's bravery.

It was decided to move to Blue Bell and the Morris House. Hoping that the defence of the Delaware would resist the fleet under Admiral Howe, the American army could invest by land, and thus as Franklin had said, Philadelphia has taken General Howe instead of Howe taking Philadelphia.

Intercepted letters giving information that Howe had detached some of his force to the Jerseys, to aid in clearing the River Delaware, Washington determined to attack the British camp at Germantown. The British encampment extended across the village of Germantown at right angles with the main road. From the Skippack Creek, 14 miles, the march began down the Skippack road, to approach by four routes, that all should arrive at the same time.

The divisions of Sullivan and Wayne, flanked by Conway's Brigade, were to enter the town by a road leading to the enemy's

centre, while Armstrong with the Pennsylvania Militia were to take the road on the right near the Schuylkill and gain their left.

The divisions of Greene and Stephens flanked by McDougal's Brigade were to make a circuit on the American left by the Lime-kiln Pike, and attack the British right wing, while the Maryland and Jersey Militia under Smallwood were to march down by a road still further to the left, Old York Road, and fall upon their right flank and rear. The plan was well concerted and the surprise complete. Washington accompanied the right wing, emerging from the woods at Chestnut Hill. The morning was dark, and there was a heavy fog.

The patrol led by Capt. Allen McLane, attacked the soldiers stationed as pickets, attached to a battalion forming at Mount Airy. Wayne led the attack with light infantry. He says they broke at first, but soon formed, and a well-directed fire followed on both sides. The British again gave way, but returned. Sullivan's division formed on the west of the road and joined in the attack. The rest were too far off. The enemy broke, leaving their artillery, and were hotly pursued by Wayne. "Our men pushed on with the bayonet," says Wayne, "remembering Paoli, Sept. 20th." Officers tried to restrain them and a terrible mêlée occurred. The fog, together with the smoke from the guns made it as dark as night. The whole force of the enemy were driven from the ground, leaving the tents standing, and all the baggage. Col. Musgrave threw himself with some companies of the 40th British Regiment, into Chew's house. The main body passed on, pursued by Wayne.

As the rest of this division came up to join in the pursuit, Musgrave opened fire from the upper windows of Chew's house. This halted them; some were for pushing on, but General Knox objected, on the old military maxim, "never leave a garrisoned fort in the rear." Lieutenant Smith, demanding surrender, with a flag of truce, was mortally wounded. The artillery was too light, and an attempt to fire the house failed. At length a regiment was left, and the rest passed on. This delay was fatal though only half an hour. The divisions could not be united. The fog

and the smoke rendered all obscure at 30 yards. They knew nothing of their position; the original plan was only carried out in the centre; the flanks were not molested.

Sullivan, however, reinforced by the North Carolina Brigade, pushed on a mile beyond Chew's house, when the left wing of the enemy gave way before him. Greene and Stephens having made a circuit, were late, and became separated by reason of Stephens's division stopping to relieve the force at Chew's house. Greene pushed on to the market place, driving the enemy and taking a number of prisoners. The enemy began to waver; Smallwood and the New Jersey and Maryland troops were just showing themselves on the right flank of the enemy, and our troops seemed on the point of carrying the day, when a singular panic seized our army. Wayne's division having pursued three miles, alarmed by an approach of a body of American troops on their left, which they mistook for the enemy, fell back in spite of their officers. Falling upon Stephens's division, they threw them into a panic, thinking they were the enemy, thus all was in confusion, and our army fled from their own victory, pursued by light horse from Philadelphia. The retreat met with less loss than might have been expected, the Americans carrying their guns and making a running fight. Wayne, in the meantime, turned his cannon from the Church hill and brought the enemy to a stand. Then the retreat continued all day, to the Perkiomen Creek, 20 miles.

Sullivan writes that Washington greatly exposed himself, and yielded to his entreaties to retire, but returned.

Washington writes to Congress: "Every account confirms the opinion I first entertained, that our troops retreated on the instant when victory was declared. The tumult and discord and even despair which it seemed had taken place in the British army was scarcely to be paralleled, and it is said, so thoroughly did the idea of retreat prevail that Chester had been fixed for their rendezvous. I can discover no other cause for not improving this happy opportunity than the extreme haziness of the weather."

So, also, Capt. Heath, of Virginia, writes: "What makes this inglorious flight more galling to us was that we knew the enemy had ordered a retreat or rendezvous at Chester. And that 2000 Hessians had actually crossed the Schuylkill; that the Tories were in intense distress and moving from the city: that our prisoners confined in the new jail made it ring with shouts of joy; that we passed, on pursuing, over 20 pieces of cannon, their tents standing filled with the choicest baggage; in fine, everything was as we could have wished, when the above flight took place."

Wayne writes: "Fortune smiled upon us for full three hours. The enemy were broken, dispersed, flying in all quarters; we were in possession of their whole encampment, together with all their artillery. A windmill attack was made upon a house, into which six light companies had thrown themselves, to avoid our bayonets. Our troops were deceived by this attack; thinking it something formidable, they fell back. The enemy believing it to be a retreat, followed; confusion ensued, and we ran away from the arms of victory open to us."

The plan of attack was too widely extended for concert, and too complicated for precise coöperation, and the march had to be conducted in the night and with a large portion of undisciplined militia, and yet a bewildering fog alone appeared to have prevented its complete success.

Irving says, however, that the impression made by the audacity of this attack attempted upon Germantown, was greater, we are told, than that caused by any single incident of the War, after Lexington and Bunker Hill.

A British military historian observes: "In this action the Americans acted upon the offensive and though repulsed with loss, showed themselves a formidable adversary, capable of charging with resolution, and retreating in good order."

The army moved from Perkiomen to the old camping ground at Pennypacker's Mills. Washington was reinforced by some troops from Peekskill, no longer needed on the Hudson. To be nearer to Philadelphia he moved to the Blue Bell tavern, and encamped at Drayton's woods, with headquarters at the Morris

house. It was here that Lafayette joined him and a council of war was held; also a court martial at the request of Wayne, to investigate the Paoli affair. It was important to watch Howe, as well as to hem him in at Philadelphia, and cut off supplies.

The army moved to White Marsh. The main army encamped on the hill just beyond Fort Washington, called Camp Hill, formerly the property of John Fell, now Mrs. Alexander Van Rensselaer's. Washington's headquarters were established just below, in the house owned by George Emlen, a prominent Quaker merchant. The left wing occupied Fort Washington, where a strong redoubt was erected to command the road leading to Germantown and Philadelphia. The Militia under General Potter, occupied *this* hill to the right.

The country was thickly wooded, with the Sandy Run in the rear of Fort Washington and the Wissahickon running along the side, with trees leveled in front, their tops pointed outward, made a strong position.

Gates was pressed to send reinforcements, especially Morgan's men. He delayed, finally they and other troops arrived. The delay was embarrassing as the enemy were making attempts on Fort Mercer and Fort Mifflin on the Delaware. Howe constructed batteries and invested by land and water, but Washington could not relinquish his position as it would leave the stores at Easton, Bethlehem and Allentown exposed. General Varnum was stationed at Red Bank.

Howe attacked Fort Mifflin and the garrison was compelled to retreat to Red Bank. Finally the British fleet was successful in ascending the river, and the Americans were driven from their position. Had Gates obeyed orders and sent reinforcements, we might have stood our ground.

Washington's position here at Fort Washington was very strong; the British delayed action until they had completed some defences along the Schuylkill, and took extraordinary precaution in case of defeat.

On the fourth of December, Capt. Allen McLane brought news to Washington's headquarters that an attack was to be

made that night. About three, the alarm guns announced the approach of the enemy; they advanced as day broke and encamped at Chestnut Hill, three miles from the right wing. Brigadier General Irvine was sent with 600 Pennsylvania Militia to skirmish. He met a force coming from Flourtown at the foot of the hill below the church. His men gave way and he was taken prisoner. In the night the British moved northward, approaching within a mile of the encampment, the valley and the stream of Sandy Run intervening; there on the edge of the hill they remained all day, having formed a line from our right to the extremity of our left upon the long height opposite to ours in the wood, fully three miles in extent directly in front of the American camp. At one o'clock in the morning they inclined still further to the left, indicating a general attack if Washington could be induced to leave his stronghold.

To check the plundering of the farmers in the vicinity of Edge Hill, Morgan and his corps, supported by Potter's brigade and Col. Gist's Maryland Militia, were sent forward. A severe fight took place; the British were obliged to concentrate their forces. The militia then fell back, as it was determined that no general engagement should take place unless they (*i. e.*, the British) should attack Washington in position.

In this advance the British had secured a higher and more commanding position; Washington felt that an attack was intended. At 12 o'clock that night, 12 regiments paraded before Washington's headquarters under Sullivan and Wayne, when news came that the enemy had retreated to Philadelphia. Washington writes to Congress: "I detached light troops to fall upon them, but they were not able to come up with them. I sincerely wish they had made the attack, as the issue, in all probability, from the disposition of our troops, and the strong position of our camp, would have been fortunate and happy."

The British Army appear to have marched by the Church road, next by the Limekiln road, and lastly by the Susquehanna Street road, and thence down the old York road, through Jenkintown, Shoemaker's Town and Rising Sun. Washington writes

further he was doubtful of the enemy's loss; one account was 500 men killed and wounded, but this was doubtless exaggerated. Graham, in his life of General Morgan, says 350 killed and wounded, but adds that the rifle corps suffered severely.

Washington says 27 men killed in Morgan's corps besides Major Morris, a valuable officer, wounded. Christopher Marshall in his diary states that General Howe had returned on the evening of the 8th, leaving behind 200 men, to the great astonishment of the citizens. Major Simcoe of the Queen's Rangers says the rebels lost about 100 men and the King's troops a little more. This would show that the struggle had been a sharp one. Howe must have had nearly three fourths of his whole army. In the retreat, and in the four days' plundering, the British inflicted severe loss upon the inhabitants below Chestnut Hill, burning houses and seizing everything at hand, while the Hessians committed many outrages.

It has always been a matter of surprise that the British did not attack the rear, where they could have cut off Washington from his baggage and provisions.

In this connection we should not omit the story of Lydia Darrah, who, it was claimed, gave the information of the attack by Howe. This has lately become a burning question. The Daughters of the American Revolution have threatened to become excited. A writer says if Washington was the father of his country Lydia Darrah was the mother, etc. William Darrah and his wife occupied the house where Major André, the British Adjutant General, had established himself in Philadelphia. She overheard the arrangements, and feigning sleep, arose to secure the doors as the officers departed. In the morning she informed the family that she must go to Frankford for some flour, stopping at the British headquarters to obtain a pass. Leaving her bag at Frankford she continued five miles through the snow to the American outposts. Falling in with Captain John Craig of the Light Horse, sent by Washington to gather information of the movements of the enemy, she disclosed her secret. Capt. Craig conducted her to a house nearby and has-

tened to Washington's headquarters with the news. When the British Army returned to Philadelphia, the Adjutant General, Andre, entered the house and inquired if any of her family were up the night before. She replied that all had retired at 8 P. M. Andre replied: "It is very strange how Gen. Washington could have obtained the information of our attack. I knew you were asleep Lydia, for I rapped three times before you awakened, yet it is certain we were betrayed. We found Washington prepared at every point to receive us, and we were obliged to march back to the city like a parcel of fools."

In one of the historical sketches published by the Montgomery County Historical Society, the author remarks, "Shame on the American people that this brave woman should have gone to her grave without reward, while 'Captain Molly' [Pitcher] of Monmouth was rewarded. By the recommendation of Washington, her name was placed on the list of half-pay officers for life, and she also had conferred upon her the commission of sergeant. The action of Mrs. Darrah was of so much more importance to the army that we fail to understand why it should have passed unrecognized by the Government." Watson says General Armstrong and Colonel Clark gave the information Nov. 29, and Dec. 1 and 3.

Irving, in his life of Washington, tells us that Capt. Allen McLane gave Washington this information, and Washington himself writes to Congress: "From a variety of intelligence received, I had reason to believe that General Howe intended to give us a general action." In the 1st volume of "The Life and Letters of Elias Boudinot," page 68, we find he writes:

"In the autumn of 1777 the American army lay some time at Whitemarsh. I was then commissary-general of prisoners and managed the intelligence of the army. I was reconnoitering along the lines near the city of Philadelphia. I dined at a small post at the Rising Sun, about three miles from the city. After dinner a little, poor-looking, insignificant old woman came in and solicited leave to go into the country to buy some flour. While we were asking some questions she walked up to me and put into my hands a dirty old needlebook with various small pockets in

it. Surprised at this, I told her she should return and she should have an answer. On opening the needlebook I could not find anything till I got to the last pocket, where I found a piece of paper rolled into the form of a pipe shank. On unrolling it I found information that General Howe was coming out the next morning with 5,000 men, 13 pieces of cannon, baggage wagons and 11 boats on wagon wheels. On comparing this with other information I found it true, and immediately rode first to headquarters. According to my usual custom, and agreeable to orders received from General Washington, I first related to him the naked facts without comment or opinion. He received it with much thoughtfulness. I then gave him my opinion, that General Howe's design was to cross the Delaware under pretense of going to New York, then in the night to recross the Delaware above Bristol and come suddenly on our rear, where we were totally unguarded, and cut off our baggage, if not the whole army. He heard it without a single observation, being deep in thought. I repeated my observations. He still was silent. Supposing myself unattended to I earnestly repeated my opinion with urging him to order a few redoubts thrown up in our rear, as it was growing late. The general answered me, 'Mr. Boudinot, the enemy have no business in our rear; the boats are designed to deceive us. To-morrow morning by daylight you will find them coming down such a byroad on our left.' Then calling an aide-de-camp, ordered a line thrown up along our whole front at the foot of the hill. As I was quartered on that very byroad with six or eight other officers, a mile in front of our army and no picket advanced in front of us, his opinion made a deep impression upon me, though I thought the general under a manifest mistake. I returned to my quarters, first obtaining a picket to be put on that road in advance. When I got home the officers were informed of the news and my opinion that we should lose our baggage at least the next morning. That our general was at least out in his judgment, but repeated his last words, proposed it as a matter of prudence to have our horses saddled and the servants ordered to have them

at the door on the first alarm gun being fired. About 3 o'clock in the morning we were aroused by the alarm guns; we immediately mounted. By sunrise the British were in possession of our quarters down the byroad mentioned by General Washington. I then said I never would set up my judgment against his. The enemy remained several days encamped on Chestnut Hill and General Washington opposite to him. On the evening of the second or third day General Washington was informed of some very harsh and severe speeches made by a committee from congress, of which Robert Morris was one, relative to General Washington for not attacking the British and putting an end to the war at once, and declaring that if he did not do it further opposition to the British was vain, etc. The fact was that both parties were so strongly covered that the assailant in all probability would have been beaten and the essential interests of America required that the Americans should gain the battle. However General Washington being exceedingly hurt with these observations and hard speeches determined at all events to hazard an attack and let the committee abide the consequences. Accordingly he detached General Wayne with his brigade to advance on the enemy and into the valley between the two armies and near the foot of Chestnut Hill, to be ready in the morning. Another brigade was advanced part of the way towards him.

"A spy, who was in our camp immediately on Wayne's moving carried the intelligence to the British general. A skirmish was had in the day and one of our militia generals was wounded and taken prisoner. He was put into a room adjoining one in which a British aide-de-camp lodged. He overheard an officer come in and tell him that the Rebels were advancing to make an attack next morning and that their retreat was ordered by the British general. When the American troops began their movement next morning at the dawn of day not a British soldier was to be seen. The light horse pursued and came up and harassed the rear of the British a few miles from Philadelphia. Thus the defeat of the American army was again providentially prevented, for we were by no means equal to the attack, as the British were so

strongly formed and our army made up of undisciplined men."

From this it would appear that Lydia Darrah really did give information and the story is true; but it was not to her alone the credit was due, which may have made it impossible to do full justice to her.

While in camp here, Washington learned of the activity of the cabal against him. It seems that on the 17th of October, 1777 he wrote to Richard Henry Lee, then in Congress, protesting against the promotion of Gen. Conway to the rank of Major-General, which threw Conway into the faction then forming. He became so active that the faction acquired the name of "Conway's Cabal." The object seemed to be to depreciate Washington's military character in comparison with that of Gates, who had achieved the surrender of Burgoyne by the plans of Washington and Schuyler, and the bravery of Arnold. The correspondence between Conway and Gates, and also of James Lovell, member of Congress from Massachusetts, was of extraordinary character, on a parallel with that of General Charles Lee.

Washington writes Conway—Sir: A letter which I received last night contained the following paragraph—in a letter from General Conway to General Gates he says . . . Heaven has determined to save your country, or a weak general and bad Counsellors would have ruined it. I am sir your humble servant,

"GEORGE WASHINGTON."

James Lovell writes to Gates: "You have saved our Northern Hemisphere; and in spite of consummate and repeated blundering, you have changed the condition of the Southern campaign, on the part of the enemy from offensive to defensive. . . . The campaign here must soon close; if our troops are obliged to retire to Lancaster, Reading, Bethlehem, etc. for winter quarters, and the country below is laid open to the enemy's flying parties, great and very general will be the murmur—so great, so general, that nothing inferior to a commander-in-chief will be able to resist the mighty torrent of public clamor and public vengeance.

We have had a noble army melted down by ill-judged marches, marches that disgrace the authors and directors, and which have occasioned the severest and most just sarcasm and contempt of our enemies.

"How much are you to be envied my dear general! How different your conduct and your fortune!

"A letter from Col. Mifflin, received at the writing of the last paragraph, gives me the disagreeable intelligence of the loss of our fort on the Delaware. You must know the consequences—loss of the river boats, galleys, ships of war, etc: good winter quarters to the enemy, and a general retreat, or ill-judged, blind attempt on our part to save a gone character.

"Conway, Spotswood, Conner, Ross and Mifflin resigned, and many other brave and good officers are preparing their letters to Congress on the same subject. In short this army will be totally lost, unless you come down and collect the virtuous band who wish to fight under your banner, and with their aid save the Southern Hemisphere. Prepare yourself for a jaunt to this place —Congress must send for you."

Finally the intrigues of the cabal were exposed resulting in the duel of Conway and the complete extinction of the whole party, during the encampment at Valley Forge. Lafayette writes that Lee would have profited by their schemes, not Gates. Gates was the real conspirator and Conway but a tool.

The winter had now set in. After holding a council of war, the Commander-in-chief decided to march to Valley Forge where he could protect the country and watch the enemy. As the stone erected by this society at the side of the Bethlehem Pike below Fort Washington, tells us, about 700 feet south of this stone is an American redout and the site of Howe's threatened attack, Dec. 6, 1777. From here Washington's army marched to Valley Forge." Along this Skippack road, turning to the left at the Broad Axe, across Swedesford (Norristown) at Matson's Ford (Conshohocken) to Gulf Mills, thence to Valley Forge. As Washington said you could track the army by the blood from the feet of the men in the snow.

The attempt to capture Lafayette took place after the army was in winter quarters at Valley Forge, but the music of the Meschianza reminds us that we are close to the scene. Washington having heard that the British were about to evacuate Philadelphia detached Lafayette with about 2200 men and five guns on the 18th of May, 1778 on a reconnoissance, cautioning him against surprise. He marched from Valley Forge crossing at Swede's Ford (Norristown) to Barren Hill, and took position near the church about eleven miles from Philadelphia and twelve from Valley Forge. Secure against an attack on his front and right, General Potter with the militia was ordered to scout and guard against an attack from Philadelphia by Germantown and Chestnut Hill.

Generals Howe and Clinton learning that Lafayette was thus isolated from the main army, thought it an opportunity to wind up the Meschianza and bring Lafayette back to Philadelphia as a prisoner of war. Apart from the glory to Howe, who was about to return to England, it would have been a blow to the French negotiations, and therefore a most important affair. Mr. Charlemagne Tower, quoting from the memoirs of the Marquis, says: "So certain were they of success that they had invited a party of ladies and gentlemen to meet General Lafayette at an entertainment the next day. Admiral Lord Howe accompanied his brother as a volunteer. So the morning after the Meschianza one division of 8,000 men with fifteen pieces of artillery under General Grant moved by Frankford to White Marsh, thence along this Skippack Pike to the Broad Axe about a mile from here, turning to Plymouth, securing Swede's ford in the rear of the American troops.

General Potter was supposed to be on the watch at this very point, but for some reason never explained to this day disappeared.

Another column with a force of cavalry marched by Germantown along the Schuylkill on the left directly to Barren Hill, while a third body of men advanced forward along the Ridge road to attack the front. Generals Howe and Clinton accom-

panied this last force. Thus it was intended that Lafayette should be completely surrounded. But it seems from the tradition of a local historian that a certain Captain Stoy living near the mill below discovered the troops which the militia had failed to find and ran to the Broad Axe, where he called up Rudolph Bartleson, who continued on to Plymouth and gave the alarm. Some say that Stoy ran across these fields direct to Plymouth. Mr. Tower says that General Grant stopped at the Broad Axe for breakfast, affording an opportunity for the news to spread.

There are letters from French officers on Lafayette's staff relating how Lafayette discovered Matson's Ford (Conshohocken) which he gained before General Grant reached it. Throwing forward a force to hold Grant, Lafayette withdrew his men across this ford to the other side of the Schuylkill. Lafayette says in his memoirs Generals Howe and Clinton led back their men to Philadelphia "very tired, very much ashamed and very much laughed at." Remaining all night on the South side of Matson's Ford, after the retreat of the British he recrossed and took up his former position at Barren Hill, thence across Swedes' Ford by the road he had come, back to Valley Forge.

A brilliant feat but "a very near thing."

Nothing now remains in sight save the flag contributed by this society to the care of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, to whom we owe our thanks, and St. Thomas's Church. There is no greater monument than a historic church. For more than two centuries St. Thomas's Church has prospered with a bright future still before it, unlike the pitiful tale of stranded churches in large cities. Philadelphia was in its earlier days a mere village, and all this country thickly wooded, perhaps desolate.

When we say the church we do not mean the beautiful structure consecrated in 1881—once a church always a church. Improvement and change of structure indicate progress. The original was but a log chapel, built in 1695, by the family of Major Jasper Farmer, the first settler. In 1701 this log chapel was destroyed by fire and the descendants of Major Farmer

erected a substantial stone church which stood for 107 years. The rector of the church at Oxford, about 10 miles distant, had charge of both. The road on the left (right from here), was built to facilitate his journey between the two churches. Known as the Church road, it is to-day recognized as one of the best in the county.

Among others the Rev. William Smith officiated until the Revolutionary War. Services were then suspended. The church hill was on three occasions occupied by military forces, first by the Americans after the battle of Germantown when Wayne brought the pursuing enemy to a stand, second by a body of Hessian cavalry, and third by the British Army under Howe. The church was defaced and finally almost destroyed by fire.

The grave stones, then long flat pieces, resting on supports received rough treatment. Fires were lighted under them and some of the upright stones bear the marks of bullets.

At the close of the war the church was a ruin and some years passed before services could be resumed. In 1881, while the Rev. Henry Ingersoll Meigs was rector, with the Sheaff family, who still reside near in the house of Anthony Morris, the present structure was completed, as the late rector, the Rev. Samuel Snelling, has said, a lasting monument to themselves forever. The present rector, the Rev. Alexander J. Miller, extends to you an invitation to see for yourselves that nothing has been exaggerated.

I have tried to tell you the story of Fort Washington ; but there is so much more to be said that I must ask you to consider very seriously whether you could not make a second pilgrimage to complete that history of which you have had a mere summary.